

Malabys

2 hardy souls forged fine legacy in valley

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Many early settlers rode into Glenwood Springs in covered wagons. But Eleanora Malaby went a step further — she rode in on horseback, over Independence Pass, to reach the infant town in 1883.

Eleanora was coming to the town to meet her new husband, Perry Malaby, whom she had married earlier in Columbus, Ohio. In Denver, after getting off the train from Ohio, she decided the easiest way to reach her new home was by horseback.

While buying her packhorse, Eleanora met up with two gamblers headed her way and they set off in the direction of Aspen.

Raised on a ranch, Eleanora was used to horses and long rides. That experience helped her stay calm even when her pack-laden animal rolled on its side as she was riding it across Independence Pass.

She also befriended her traveling companions on the trip so that they became friends and upon arriving at the foot of the pass on the Aspen side, the two men refused to let her go with Perry until he proved he, indeed, had married Eleanora.

That adventure is one of several that Ora Sloss, the Malabys' granddaughter, recounts to illustrate her grandmother's physical and emotional strength during the Roaring Fork Valley's pioneer era — days when she was one of the first white women in the area.

"The women, you have to admire. (Eleanora) couldn't be afraid of anybody, and you know, she wasn't," said Sloss, a Glenwood Springs

native.

She said that her grandmother, after the horse rolled atop the pass, realized "the horse's cinch was too tight. She just got up and fixed the horse's cinch while the gamblers watched.

"But she'd been raised on a ranch. It was nothing for her to hop on a horse and come over."

After meeting in Aspen, the young couple traveled to Glenwood Springs where Malaby owned a ranch with another settler, John Manning. The ranch was located where 84 Lumber is today, south of the Colorado River across from West Glenwood.

In the early 1900s the Malabys abandoned their rural lifestyle for that of the city. Perry sold the ranch and was named town marshal.

The family moved into a house on Pitkin Avenue and began to raise their family of six children, including Sloss' mother, Margaret.

Meanwhile, the area's original inhabitants, the Ute Indians, still visited the town and its "magical waters" every spring. The Utes made Eleanora apprehensive at first, Sloss, recalls her grandmother telling her when she was a child.

"The Utes had this habit of peering into people's windows, and one night they looked into my grandmother's house. She told her husband about it, and he just said, 'They're curious to see a white woman.' So, she invited them into the house."

Soon Eleanora and the Ute women became friendly and compared their babies. Eleanora made it a habit to invite the Utes, including Chief Colorow, into her home and served biscuits and tea.

"She just thought that was kind of



Eleanora and Perry Malaby and their children.

Photo courtesy of Ora Sloss

fun. She got a kick out of it," Sloss said, smiling at the memory.

Eleanora also was one of the first women to supply homemade cake for what then was the town's one-day celebration, Strawberry Day, which began in 1898. The women would gather the week before the festival to pick and hull strawberries.

Despite the early-day hardships faced by the pioneers, Sloss said her grandmother, who died in 1962, never complained. Running water was

unheard of then; women bought it a barrel at a time from a water wagon.

Women also sewed most of the clothes for themselves and their own families, and foodstuffs centered around fresh game and homemade bread, baked fresh once or twice a week.

But women like Eleanora also pushed for better education for their children. They insisted, and got, schools built in the late 1890s.

And, like Eleanora, they often helped their neighbors through tough

times.

"She never said it was hard," Sloss said. "You always had things on the back of your stove in case someone was hungry. And my grandfather thought nothing of waking her up in the middle of the night to help someone who was hurt or to be there for someone having a baby.

"They were just normal people and that was something they had to do. You had to be there for your neighbors because that's all people had."